DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 763 SO 018 348

AUTHOR Schoolland, Ken
TITLE Ijime: The Bullying of Japanese Youth.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT International Education; v15 n2 p5-28 Spr 1986

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Aggression; Child Abuse; Corporal Punishment; *Discipline; Foreign Countries; Secondary Education; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior; Students; Suicide; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; Violence
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

"Ijime," which means the intimidation of the weakest people in a social group, has become prevalent in the Japanese educational system. Between April and October of 1985, 155,066 cases of bullying were reported in Japan's schools. The education council cites the rigorous discipline measures undertaken by teachers as the cause of rising violence by students. Reports of student deaths and abuse at the hands of teachers have been made. The young people of Japan are subjected to a system of strict regimentation in which school becomes all-consuming. Seventy-three percent of Japan's voters are dissatisfied with the current educational system. Former Prime Minister Nakasone instructed the Ministry of Education to initiate a sweeping investigation of the causes of violence and possible solutions. Some believe that fostering morality and patriotism in the schools can avert the crisis. The education council has said that the most important reform is to eliminate the uniformity and inflexibility which are thought to be at the root of these educational problems in Japan. Council members hope to accomplish this by respecting the dignity of individuals. The most promising effort at reform is to create legislation to protect the human rights of children. This view would recognize that young people have the right to be protected from the use of aggression and coercion. (SM)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED287763

# International Education

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ken Schoolland

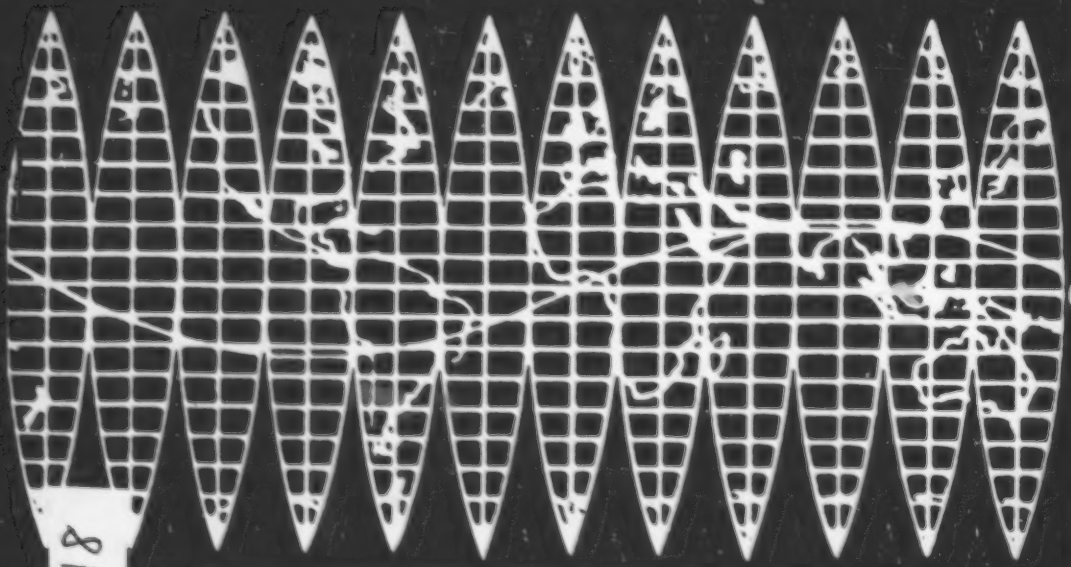
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.



SO018348

## IJIME: THE BULLYING OF JAPANESE YOUTH

Ken Schoolland

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 2 • SPRING 1986

# International Education

## CONTENTS

Editors' Comments ..... 3

Ijime: The Bullying of Japanese Youth ..... 5
**Ken Schoolland**

Query Section ..... 29

Taking the Best from the English Primary Schools ..... 30
**Carolyn Schluck**

Supply and Demand Factors Influencing the Educational Dropout Rate in Africa and Asia ..... 37
**Mary M. Wood, William W. Swan, and Norman J. Wood**

Ponderings of a Pig Skin Boiling Educator ..... 45
**Fergus Rule**

Documents Section ..... 48

The Developmental Roles of Education in Kuwait ..... 54
**Larry Neal Garrett and Carolyn Joanne Garrett**

Teacher Education in Nigeria: An Evolving Academic System ..... 63
**Egerton Osunde and P. David Ellis**

*International Education* is published bi-annually by the College of Education, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-3400. Subscriptions are $8.00 a year for U.S.A. and possessions; $12.00 a year for Canada and other countries. Please make checks payable to The University of Tennessee. The first issue, Volume 1, No. 1, was Fall, 1971. International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 0160-5429.

E01-1556-001-87

## EDITORS

Siegfried C. Dietz
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Karl J. Jost
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

## MANAGING EDITOR

Sue Carey
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Jack W. Graham, Professor
Department of Higher Education
Southern Illinois University
at Carbondale
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Mark T. Orr, Chairman
Department of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida 33620

Mark A. Hector, Professor
Department of Educational
and Counseling Psychology
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Knoxville, TN 37996

Donald K. Sharpes, Director
Combined Graduate Program
Utah State University and
Weber State College
Ogden, Utah 84408

Ruixuan Mao
Professor of English
Southwest China Teacher's University
Chongqing, PRC

Shiding Zheng
Professor of English
Southwest China Teacher's
University
Chongqing, PRC

J. Jeffries McWhirter, Professor
Department of Counselor Education
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona 85287


## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Articles should be typewritten and double spaced and be six to twelve pages in length. The original and one copy should be submitted. It is preferred that the references be noted according to the American Psychological Association style.

Please send manuscripts to either Dr. Karl J. Jost or Dr. Siegfried C. Dietz at the following address:

*International Education Journal*
College of Education
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-3400

# IJIME: THE BULLYING OF JAPANESE YOUTH

**Ken Schoolland**
Associate Professor
Hakodate University, Japan

*An Education System in Shock*

"U.S. Educators Marvel at Japan's Schools" reads the headline of an article by Keith Richburg, a correspondent for the *Washington Post.* Richburg's report captures the sense of enthusiasm which was expressed by a team of U.S. education experts who visited Kyoto and Tokyo last fall for a weeklong, international conference on education reform.

This view of Japanese schools is typical of a growing perception in the West that the education model for the 21st Century lies across the Pacific. Hard working and well disciplined students, who outperform their western counterparts in math and science exams, are frequently associated with the robust growth of the Japanese economy over the past few decades. Thus, many Americans believe that Japanese schools hold a key to the future of competition in industry and technology.

However, a close look at the headlines of Japanese newspapers throughout the year might lead to a very different conclusion. In a sampling of these reports:

3 YOKOHAMA TEACHERS LED 'SCHOOL OF TERROR'
—*The Daily Yomiuri*, 1-19-86

TEACHER KILLS HIS STUDENT WITH 'DISCIPLINARY' BLOWS
—*The Japan Times*, 5-11-85

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL BOY KILLS SELF OVER BULLYING
—*The Asahi Evening News*, 2-3-86

In April of this year, the government's Extraordinary Education Council summarized the crisis in Japanese schools: "Bullying, suicides among schoolchildren, dropping out from school, increasing delinquency, violence both at home and school, heated entrance exam races, overemphasis on scholastic ratings, and torture of children by some teachers are the result of the pathological mechanisms that have become established in Japan's education system. Without drastic reforms, Japan's education system would not be able to recover to normalcy ("Gist of Education," 1986).

In pursuit of normalcy, the Japanese have been struggling with education reforms that could eventually result in the most significant changes since World War II. This upheaval has been inspired by widespread recognition that Japan's education system has deeply rooted problems that are certainly not to be admired and not to be imitated.

*The Grass Is Always Greener*

While some Americans have been marveling at the education practices in Japan, the Japanese have been busy eyeing the West. One newspaper recently declared, "Premier Praises U.S. System of Education." Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone has been intrigued with the American education system and, over the past year, his Education Council has battled for reforms that are drawn from an appreciation of western individuality.

The Education Council said that the most important reform is to do away with the "uniformity, inflexibility, closedness and lack of internationality" which are thought to be at the root of education ills in Japan. The council members hope to accomplish this by "respecting the dignity of individuals, individuality, freedom, self-discipline and individual responsibility."

*The Japan Times* applauded the council's report. Its editorial observed that "giving top priority to respect of individuality in the official report on education reform is a major breakthrough in a country where consensus and group harmony have been the guiding principles" ("Panel Urges," 1986).

*No Questions Asked*

It surely is a "breakthrough" to place such emphasis on individuality, but it is a mistake to suppose that this will be supplanting a system of "consensus and group harmony." Generally speaking, the young people of Japan are subjected to a system of strict regimentation in which they have little or no voice.

"In most schools," reports Keith Richburg (1985), "children wear uniforms: black pants, white shirts and black high-collar military-looking jackets for the boys; blue skirts and sweaters, white socks and blouses for the girls. Cosmetics are usually not allowed, and teachers in many schools keep a bottle of nail polish remover at their desk, in case some girls attempt a brazen show of individuality."

"When the teacher enters," observes Richburg, "the children, all wearing name tags, stand for a formal greeting: a stiff bow. They usually sit attentively as the teacher lectures, and no one interrupts with questions."

*Portable to America?*

Ironically, it is this kind of regimentation that seems to have impressed the delegation of American educators at the Kyoto/Tokyo Conference. In praising the strict discipline, the fine performance of students on standardized tests, and the relatively high pay scale for Japanese teachers, some of the U.S. education experts expressed a desire to adopt much of the Japanese system in American schools.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Chester E. Finn is quoted as saying, "There's about six or eight major shifts we'd have to make to be more like the Japanese. Whether we have the gumption to make them at all is the question."

Another delegate, Henry J. Walberg, a professor of education at the University of Illinois, chimed in, "I think its portable. Gumption and willpower, that's the key."

Thus, "gumption" may soon transform American education. If that hap-

pens, there are a few snags in the Japanese system that will tag along—like a tiger riding the back of a swan.

*School Dominated Life*

School is much more of an all-consuming life for students in Japan than it is for students in the West. A typical school year in the United States is 180 days. In Japan, young people go to school six days a week and they get shorter vacations. Thus, the school year adds up to 240 days of instruction. And this is only half the picture.

Since there is intense pressure to perform well on high school and college entrance exams, students attend private "cram" schools in addition to spending many hours at night on homework. Attendance at cram schools usually adds 3 to 8 hours of classroom study each week. Students who fail the exams, "ronin," try again after studying full time at the cram schools for another year.

At present, one out of every four elementary school students and one out of every two junior high school students go to cram schools, known as "juku's." Enrollment of junior high pupils has risen three-fold in the past ten years, despite the average monthly cost of $75 per student ("Children Attending," 1986).

Furthermore, students are often required to be regular members of clubs or sport teams. The basketball season in Hokkaido, for example, runs all year and the coach becomes a sort of surrogate father in a nation where real fathers are often working 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week.

According to Ken Kageyama, a professor of physical education studies at Aichi University of Education, 80 percent of the youths at the municipally-run schools in Okazaki city belong to sports clubs. These clubs have practices in the mornings, after school, Saturday afternoon, Sundays, and even during summer and winter holidays. Says Kageyama, "Children do not have time to play. It is as if club activities and homework assignments were used to restrict children's freedom" (Kawabata, 1986).

*All Pervasive Rules*

Even after leaving school, students are bound by a comprehensive list of rules that govern their lives. Last August, the Japan Bar Association reported that most public high schools and junior high schools across Japan impose exacting and complicated rules and regulations on virtually every aspect of a student's personal, social, and academic life, both on and off the school grounds, both day and night.

The report cited a middle school in Aomori prefecture which "orders its students to march to music in neat lines, eyes turned toward the teacher on a platform at the morning roll call. In standing at attention, toes should be angled at 45 to 60 degrees and fingers should be extended straight with the palms touching the body. In saluting, the upper body should be inclined forward at 30 degrees and held rigid before resuming an upright posture in a smooth manner" ("Schools 'Too Strict,' " 1985).

*24 Hours A Day*

Some schools reportedly have two or three hundred meticulous rules which govern student behavior 24 hours a day. Young people are required to carry a little book with them at all times which lists regulations and serves as a record of each student's compliance throughout the year.

Frequently one can see signs prominently displayed in school buildings which resemble "wanted posters." These posters show two pictures, profile and back view, of a male or female student who is wearing the permissible hairstyle. These and other rules governing appearance are strictly enforced at the school gates or by surprise inspections at school assemblies.

One teacher explained "the wet down" inspection this way: "Without warning, all the girls at the high school are told to line up in the gym. Then a teacher goes down the rows with a bucket of water and a comb. When a wet comb is run through a student's hair, you can tell if they've had a permanent. Those that violate the rules are pulled aside and have their hair cut on the spot."

The rules are also enforced by a system of constant surveillance throughout the community. One high school teacher told me, "The teachers take turns at 'detective' duty by roaming through the discos and video parlours looking for students who are violating regulations." Another teacher commented, "Students are regularly warned to behave themselves on the busses to and from school since their behavior will be watched and reported by off-duty teachers."

*Even Hit with Baseball Bats*

So what can happen to students who violate the rules? One might suspect that some reprimand or a visit to the principal's office would be the standard practice. In Japan, it's quite a different matter.

One parent confided that she received a scolding from her son's teacher when it was found that the boy had gone to the public school with pant cuffs that were one centimeter too wide. And she was scolded over the phone again when her son was found to be missing the plastic collar for his uniform.

If the "crime" is as severe as being late to class, not doing one's homework, talking in class, or even associating with a student who has a bad reputation, then it is possible that the student will receive a very hard blow across the head or face. Students have reported that it is usual to be hit with an open hand or fist, but it is not uncommon to be hit with some object—sticks, shoes, books, chairs, and even baseball bats. The hitting of students is so widespread, in fact, that it is beginning to cause a nationwide furor.

A professor at Ibaraki University revealed a poll showing that young people had been physically punished an average 23.5 times throughout their school careers. Ten percent of the respondents reported witnessing punishments severe enough to send students to clinics or hospitals for treatment ("Poll: Kids Get Punished," 1986).

In my own survey of around two hundred young people, both male and female, 90 percent reported being hit over the head or face during their junior or high school years. Several students claimed to have been hit more than two hundred times for what they considered to be minor infractions of the rules.

The hitting was most likely to be practiced by male teachers. According to the respondents, as much as 90 percent of their high school and junior high school teachers and 60 percent of the teachers in their elementary schools were men.

*Killed Over A Hair Dryer*

Sometimes these incidents in "behavior modification" have led to tragedy. In May 1985, newspapers reported that 16-year-old Toshinao Takahashi was beaten to death because he was caught violating a rule against the use of electric hair dryers while on a high school trip.

Takahashi's teacher was enraged because the boy showed no remorse after being scolded, so the teacher began to kick and punch the student as a "disciplinary measure." Takahashi fell unconscious and died of what was later diagnosed as shock.

The publicity surrounding this severe incident resulted in the conviction of the teacher, Kazunori Amamori, to three years of imprisonment. More importantly, the case exposed routine conditions of brutality that have existed in many schools.

At the trial, Amamori was depicted as a kind-hearted teacher who was transformed by a school system that considers corporal punishment as a way of life. Twenty of the teachers are said to have regularly carried bamboo sticks and whips in the classrooms.

Teachers who didn't beat students were regarded as lacking enthusiasm for education. "My fellow teachers taunted me with being too soft," Amamori told the court. "I had no alternative but to physically punish the student" ("Verdict Spotlights," 1986).

Soon after public opinion had become aroused by this case, symposiums were organized to encourage parents and students to come forward with their complaints. Hundreds responded with stories that have shocked the nation.

*"Don't Skip Soccer Practice Or Else . . . "*

One Japanese mother recounted how her son was subjected to three years of abuse by one teacher. The youth was kicked, beaten, and dragged around the school yard. His head was pounded against a soccer goalpost and he was thrown onto a garbage dump and trounced.

"It all started when my son skipped a soccer practice one Sunday to go fishing with a friend," explained the woman. "Ever since then the teacher has continued to pick on him for no explicable reason."

"Early in 1983, the boy was beaten so badly that he had to receive extensive medical treatment," she continued. "There were alarming symptoms of anxiety and depression. I went to the school and demanded a meeting with the teacher. He refused to see me. Instead, I was told by the principal to take my son out of the school if I had any complaints" (Nishigaito, 1985).

The woman decided to go to court, a very unusual course of action in Japan where few people will use the law in order to challenge the authorities. Reluctance is understandable. The teacher in this case was eventually fined a modest

$146 for assault and battery.

On April 28 of this year, a teacher beat two 13-year-old boys seriously with a vinyl chloride pipe because they had forgotten to bring textbooks for the social studies class. Such punishment was regularly meted out by Yukio Aoki, a teacher at Hanno Nishi Middle School in Saitama Prefecture. But this time one of the boys developed a severe headache and had to be taken to a nearby hospital. The doctors found that the boy was suffering from a brain hemorrhage.

*"Don't Tell on the Sensei"*

In another case, at Shimoseya Middle School in Yokohama, a student member of the baseball club had his skull "bashed in" when the club advisor, the mathematics teacher, hit him on the head with a baseball bat. Soon after that, four students boycotted the schoolwide sports tests and they, too, were severely punished. The youths were beaten and kicked by three teachers while other teachers looked on.

One of the boys was knocked down and trampled on the face and neck. He became mute and turned autistic because of the shock he received.

The belligerent teachers would tell their victims to keep their mouths shut if they wanted a good report so that they could advance to high school. These events were finally revealed when one of the boys, after having unsuccessfully attempted suicide, finally revealed everything to his father.

The openness has encouraged others and it now seems that stories are being told about schools all across the country. As with a ball of yarn, once the first string comes loose the whole bundle unravels.

The following section will examine the distinct status of teachers in Japan and some of the sadistic practices that have recently been uncovered at schools.

## TEACHER BULLIES IN JAPAN

*The Revered Sensei*

Unlike the situation in western nations, the status of the teacher, or "sensei," in Japan is highly revered. And when a teacher is brutal to a student, this reverence translates into a tremendous fear and timidity among both students and parents. Who would dare to challenge the authority of one who has such prestige in the community and such power over a youth's future?

Furthermore, parents can seldom get any help from the school principals because they frequently are too concerned about protecting the reputation of their schools. Reputation is extremely important for student recruitment and to community support. Thus, school officials will go to great lengths to cover up cases of violence. They have reason to be secretive.

Article 11 of the School Education Law specifically bans corporal punishment. This punishment is defined as violent assault, such as hitting or kicking, and non-violent punishment such as forcing children to sit or stand in one position for a long period of time. Ironically, a teacher is breaking the law when hitting a student for breaking the rules.

Still, there seems to be considerable public support for physical discipline, known as "taibatsu." A poll by the Japan Youth Research Institute shows that 55.7 percent of Japanese parents approve of physical punishment, versus 29.9 percent in the U.S. ("Junior High Class," 1986). And a survey by the Asahi Shimbun concluded that 81 percent of the populace believe that corporal punishment may be inevitable, depending on the situation ("50% Blame," 1986).

*A Parent's Dilemma: Beatings or Bad Grades*

The parents who oppose this kind of punishment rarely criticize the school openly because the school plays such a powerful role in the determination of a student's, and family's, future. Said one student victim's mother, "If you want your child to get good reports so they can attend a good senior high school or college, you don't make enemies with the faculty."

Takako Suzuki began a crusade four years ago to defend her son who had been the constant victim of a homeroom teacher. She claimed that the teacher had inflicted physical punishments on many of his students for 11 years. Originally, Suzuki was supported by many other parents, but this support evaporated when the parents became worried about the effect the protest would have on their children's grades. Lamented Suzuki, "They betrayed the good of their children for good grades" (Kawahara, 1986).

Masatsugu Kimura, a professor at Kyoikudai teachers' college, commented in an interview that "A teacher's confidential report about a student's attitude plays a very important function when many high schools and colleges are selecting students. So, students must be very subservient and obedient to their teachers."

Such an attitude is usually difficult for Americans to fathom because of the multitude of routes to success in the United States. In Japan, however, the path to success is much more limited. Employment in the most prestigious government posts or large corporations depends almost entirely on graduation from the most prestigious schools. To fail in school is often viewed as a financial and status disaster, both for the students and for their parents.

*Exposing a Sordid Practice*

Nevertheless, a few bold parents do register complaints and a few school officials have given out various forms of administrative punishment to the offending teachers. As a result of the media attention this past year, the number of teachers across the country who were disciplined for inflicting corporal punishment on pupils is on the rise. According to an official of the Tokyo education board, the reports of corporal punishment have increased because parents have been trying harder to bring teacher violence out into the open.

It seems that students are also becoming aware of their right to a more peaceful education. A group of 16 former students from a high school in Mie Prefecture filed a suit for a quarter of a million dollars in damages resulting from alleged violence by teachers and other senior students at the school. They claim to be suffering from the aftereffects of the beatings they received.

The plaintiffs contended, "There was no true education at the school. The students were in danger of being hurt in school. We were forced to quit school" ("16 Former Students," 1986).

The school was formed in 1965 with the ideal of seeing students and teachers "walk hand in hand." Since that time, however, one student committed suicide by jumping from one of the campus buildings and other students set fire to the school in the hope of being allowed to go home.

*A Slap on the Hand*

In a survey of 393 cases of corporal punishment in 1984, involving 2,433 students, it was revealed that about 70 percent of the students received injuries and one student died. The fatality occurred when a student was forced to practice under severe conditions following his request to quit an after school rugby club. In another case, a teacher had suspended a student upside down from a second floor window of the school ("Most Students," 1986).

Seventy-two percent of the teachers involved in these cases were given some administrative punishment and 25 percent were fined for violating the criminal code. Nevertheless, these examples of discipline haven't even begun to scratch the surface of a widespread problem.

Even when an unlucky teacher comes under fire for abusing students, the disciplinary action might be so slight that it is unlikely to be much of a deterrent. In Hokkaido Prefecture, for example, when a teacher kicked out the teeth of a student, informed sources reported that the teacher was docked 10 percent of his pay for a mere three months. Such a slight penalty does little to prevent future acts of violence and does nothing at all to compensate the victim. This would hardly satisfy the plaintiffs in a western court.

Sometimes teachers try to fend off the reprisals of students by acting in groups. The *Asahi Journal* told of one junior high school girl who was called into the principal's office where she found five teachers waiting for her. Suddenly the beating began. When the girl staggered, one of the teachers grabbed her by the hair and dragged her around the room. Her mother said that she almost fainted when her daughter returned home with a swollen face and terror-stricken eyes. But what recourse could the girl have against a whole group of such revered citizens?

*Imaginative Sadism*

Such sadism took on more imaginative forms in Hyogo Prefecture where a home economics teacher used pins to prick the abdomens of 30 students. The teacher explained that she wanted to teach the children "that wrong use of marking pens would hurt."

And there was the Nishinomiya Kita teacher who is said to have forcibly placed a connected propane hose into the mouth of a student when he refused to reveal the names of other members in a "delinquent" student's group. Justice Minister Hitoshi Shimazaki told the members of the Diet, Japan's parliament, last fall that this kind of punishment is an everyday affair at many schools in Mie Prefecture ("School Punishment," 1985).

Far more pervasive than physical violence is the verbal abuse that can seriously affect young people at a vulnerable age in their lives. Professor Minoru Yamamoto of Iwate University has recently examined the problem in the book, *Education Reform From the Children's Viewpoint.*

*Battered by Words*

Yamamoto surveyed 5,000 students on the matter of verbal attacks in the classroom. His research was sponsored by two prominent teacher's unions that, at first, hesitated at publishing the book's conclusion because it was so critical of teachers.

"But we had to go ahead," explained Masahiko Yamashita, deputy secretary-general of the Iwate Prefectural high school teacher's union. "School education is in dire need of reform, but teachers are not always honest in admitting that problems must be addressed. Very often teachers feel obliged to cover up their colleague's mistakes" (Nakatsuka, 1985).

Yamamoto found damning evidence of emotional scars suffered by young people due to their teachers' cruel and callous words: "Your presence is a total discredit to society and school." "I advise you to take out a life insurance policy—an imbecile like you would be better off dead."

The inescapable conclusion of the survey, according to Yamamoto, was that many teachers were abrasive adults bent on tormenting children.

*"You'll Never Reach Home Alive"*

One concerned teacher confided to me that students at her school must bow in silence while being scolded or they risk a renewed barrage of insults. Frequently the scolding continues until the youth is reduced to tears.

A student at the Tokyo symposium testified that his gym teacher snubbed him for months despite repeated attempts to apologize for some infraction of the rules. "The only times she let me get close to her to speak were when nobody else was looking so she could kick me hard," the boy explained.

"When she finally accepted my apology," said the boy, "she glared at me and hissed, 'Do it once again and you'll never reach your home alive.' She used to tell the class that she beat us because she cared."

This seems to be the most common excuse that has been given to me by teachers and by young people who experienced these beatings themselves. About half the students in my survey asserted that the hits they received were for their own good. This is truly a testament to the effectiveness of any indoctrination program—when the victims of abuse sanction the actions of the tormentors.

*Corporal Punishment: "Damaging But Necessary"*

Not surprisingly, approval of corporal punishment appears to be widespread among teachers themselves. Of all the teachers and teachers-in-training with whom I have discussed this issue, even some of the kindest and gentlest among them agree on the necessity of hitting students.

The Japan Teachers' Union (Nikkyoso) has been carrying out a drive to

eliminate corporal punishment, but union leaders have been stunned to discover how few teachers agree with their program. The National Education Research Institute discovered that 46 percent of the teachers support corporal punishment as a means of discipline. This was in spite of the fact that more than 60 percent of the teachers believed that such punishment could not bring positive educational results, violated human rights of the children, and harmed the teacher-student relationships ("Almost Half," 1986).

One school board member states that "society tends to glorify 'hot-blooded' teachers who resort to physical means in trying to keep disobedient students in line." He went on to complain that "meanness is too often mistaken for zeal."

*"Children Are Animals"*

One person who believes in this kind of zeal is Kinji Kato (1985), a company executive in Yokosuka City. Kato complained that all the recent media criticism of corporal punishment was making it impossible for teachers to maintain "professional standards."

Kato says, "When I raised my children, I asked their teachers to use corporal punishment if necessary. In training dogs and horses, they receive a treat whenever they behave, and are whipped when they don't. The same stance should be taken with children. Children are animals being taught to be human."

"We shouldn't criticize corporal punishment . . . if we want our children to support democracy and follow society's rules," concludes Kato. "It is about time that amateurs stop depriving the teaching profession of its pride."

*Battlefield Mentality*

Taking the opposite side of this debate is Hitoshi Maruyama (1986) from Furume City. Maruyama contends that this attitude of treating children with so much physical force and with so little respect for their rights has perverse effects. He believes that this kind of treatment in the schools more than 50 years ago was partly responsible for the atrocities that Japanese soldiers were prone to commit during the war.

"The secondary and higher educational institutes," recounts Maruyama, "used to have military drill instructors who were either sent by the Japanese Imperial Army or hired by the schools. They always abused their physical power on us for 'disciplinary' purposes.

"They often told us that our life was valued at only 'issen go rin' which was the value of a postcard at the time. The military could call up any able boy above 21 years old by sending a postcard. Thus," concludes Maruyama, "they were saying to us that you could be replaced easily by a card if and when you died on military duty."

Young people who had been battered and bruised in those days might have found some outlet on the battlefields, as Maruyama asserts, but today the battleground is frequently the school yard. And for some students, the school yard is no place to find relief from one's tormentors.

*When All Else Fails . . .*

When a popular teenage singer, Yukiko Okada, leaped to her death from a building in April of this year, it seemed to point the way to an acceptable escape for many young people who were suffering in a private world of senseless misery. In less than three weeks after Okada took her life, 36 youths committed suicide. Two-thirds of these suicide victims copied her method of jumping from buildings.

For several years the suicide rate of young people had been declining in Japan. Last year's total of 557 deaths was down 40 percent from a 1979 peak. But this trend is rapidly turning around. Suicides have already soared 20 percent over the number recorded for the same period last year.

In reflecting on the popular singer's death, one high school student, Izumi Furukawa, said, "My friends, we all talked about it after that and said how we've felt like doing it too. . . . We just get fed up with things" (Makihara, 1986).

. . . *There's Always Suicide*

Indeed, there is plenty of trauma with which to get "fed up." One high school girl suffered numerous beatings from a teacher who was in charge of her track and field club. Before killing herself, she left a note simply saying, "I'm sick and tired of being hit, and I'm sick and tired of crying."

A junior high school girl who continually clashed with her teacher left this suicide note, "I hate school. Everybody tries to cut you down. But I hate the teacher most of all, because she gets you when you're down and then tramples all over you."

And then 14-year-old Koji Sakai took a nylon rope and hanged himself from a bridge. He left a note on his desk at home saying, "Goodbye. Please ask my teacher about the details."

The "details" behind suicide usually involve a lengthy account of school bullying, of exam pressures, and of desperation at not being able to find help. According to Ko Mori, a teacher at Seiko Gakuin High School, "Physical punishments administered these days entail humiliation and are insidious and harsh. For example, a pupil who has forgotten something is made to lie supine on the floor with both legs raised, and the teacher sticks thumbtacks into the backs of his legs. Or a pupil who has not cleaned the classroom well is made to lick the bathroom floor."

"Such incredible punishments spark bullying," contends Mori. "That is, the insidious nature of corporal punishment is reflected in pupils' behavior" (Mori, 1985).

It is perfectly natural that young people will learn by imitating their elders, and if the young learn nothing else from brutal teachers, they learn how to bully others. This bullying is called "ijime," the intimidation of the weakest people in a social group. And the incidence of ijime is rapidly on the rise. The next section will examine the way teachers have created an environment conducive to student bullying.

*Imitating Intimidation*

The Education Ministry seems to be scrambling to put together accurate figures on bullying. Between April and October of last year, a total of 155,066 cases were reported in the nation's schools. Thirty percent of these involved physical harm and the rest were deemed psychological in nature ("Survey Shows," 1986).

Still, this may only be the tip of the iceberg. The National Police Agency (NPA) calculates that 60 percent of those who reported cases of bullying to the police did not even bother to consult with teachers about the matter.

As far as the police are concerned, the rate of increase is so alarming that the NPA began collecting their first statistics on this matter in 1984. The following year, parents began reporting three times as many incidents of bullying to the police. Of the 5,825 consultations, 638 criminal investigations of assault, blackmail, and various forms of intimidation were undertaken ("School Bullying," 1986).

*When Is It Murder?*

Among these cases, the NPA found that nine students had committed suicide and three were the victims of attempted murder. Violence and bodily injury accounted for 60 percent of the criminal cases. Extortion cases rose 65 percent over the previous year.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department reported that, as a result of phone calls over a three-week period in November 1985, 14 new criminal cases were taken up. One of the methods of torture that was practiced daily, according to investigators, was the poking of a hot needle under a victim's fingernail. One woman told police that bullies had inflicted cigarette burns in 16 places over her son's body.

Elsewhere in Japan, 14-year-old Ken Kumazawa hanged himself in a shed because he had been tormented by a group of students who had allegedly beaten him and extorted money from him on several occasions. Thirteen-year-old Chiharu Kameda jumped to her death from her family's condominium. Before jumping, she arranged her room neatly and wrote, "I was threatened into bullying one of my friends by two other female friends. But I couldn't do it. Those two are the bad ones."

*Atmosphere of Violence*

One parent became irate when his son was beaten up by other students. "To put it briefly," he said, "this is a violent school. You have the gym teacher pacing the floor with a bamboo sword in his hand. The student slips up and he's going to get a wallop. Inspections are held to check clothes, hair, what the kids have got in their desks. If your hair is the least bit long, the teacher gets after you with scissors and hair clippers.

"It's the atmosphere of coercion and violence in this school that gave rise to my son's being beaten up," declared the parent. "And can you blame the

kids for thinking like that? They figure if it's all right for the teachers to hit people it's all right for them to do the same. Are they wrong?" (Murakami, 1985).

Several students from Aoto Middle School in Tokyo accused young Ken Kurita of telling their leader that they should have taken their shoes off at the entrance to his house. They began to kick and punch him. Kurita finally died after the others struck his head against a wall.

At Kita-Oshihara Junior High, a gang of six students had extorted up to $2,500 from about 120 of their classmates. According to investigators, the six boys called younger students to the corridor or to the lavatory during lunchtime in order to bully money out of them. These savvy lads had learned a lesson about raw majority rule.

*Teacher Groupies*

Student bullying is frequently the action of young jackals who reinforce the hostility that some teachers have toward students who are different. New students, students with long hair, or even students who challenge the teacher's authority are all easy marks for the bullies.

At a junior high school in Gunma Prefecture, three students were beaten up by five others after two of the victims called for free speech in the student council. The bullies accused the others of "being cheeky" for daring to suggest that the student council should be a place where anyone can express his or her opinions freely. The victims in this case tried very hard to conceal the beatings because, as is often the case, to report such an incident brings little help from the officials and usually results in greater reprisals from the bullies.

According to Yoshio Murakami, a journalist who has covered many bullying cases for *The Asahi Journal*, "We see here a build up in the schools of unhealthy energy directed at isolating certain individuals with the tacit approval or even complicity of certain adults."

Students at the Nakano-Fujimi Junior High School in Tokyo reportedly said that one 14-year-old boy was hit 30 to 40 times in the back and several times in the face by a classmate. The victim repeatedly shouted to the teacher for help but was ignored. When the boy couldn't stand it any longer, he turned around to grapple with his attacker. According to the student onlookers, the teacher finally yelled "Stop it!" But the teacher was directing the command at the original victim, not the one who had been his persistent attacker.

*"Rest in Peace"*

This kind of complicity finally led to tragedy at the Nakano Junior High School. Hirofumi Shikagawa had been the target of intimidation in the fall of 1985. According to Shikagawa's father, the boy had been tormented by students who wrote on his face and forced him to dance in school hallways and to sing from school yard tree tops.

Then the bullies staged a mock funeral for him and asked four teachers to "join in the fun" by signing a condolence card on Shikagawa's untimely death. "May his soul sleep in peace," wrote his 57-year-old homeroom teacher, Namio



17

Fujisaki. "Take care of yourself, goodbye," wrote another teacher. And still another scribbled, "Rest in peace."

Following the incident, Shikagawa began to avoid school and frequently complained of headaches and stomach pains. When he did go to school, only 11 days in January, he often hid in the school restroom. At last, Shikagawa took the grim message of his teachers to heart. He scribbled on a piece of paper torn from a shopping bag, "I don't want to die, but it's like living in hell to go on like this." Then the boy hanged himself on a coat hook in the restroom at Morioka train station.

*The Callous Teacher: Culprit or Victim?*

Fortunately, the circumstances of this case were brought to light. When journalists and the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education began digging into the case, Fujisaki asked his students to keep quiet about his role in the mock funeral. This compounded his offense and Fujisaki was eventually forced to resign. The salaries of the two other teachers and the principal were cut and two other teachers were reprimanded.

Though these punishments may have been just, there are some who protested the ruling because they consider the whole education system to be at fault, not just a few individual teachers. One of these is Ichiro Tanaka, Chairman of the Japan Teachers' Union (Nikkyoso). He claims that the current "dehumanized education" is primarily responsible for the suicides of children.

Defenders of the teaching profession contend that the vast majority of teachers are conscientious and that they are doing their best under the circumstances. One high school teacher, Eizabura Komatsu of Narita City, complained of the tremendous burden of handling classes with nearly 50 students. "We teachers also would like to communicate more with our pupils, but are presently unable to do so because there are too many in a class" (Komatsu, 1985).

There is little doubt that many teachers have also suffered under the strains of the system. This point was soundly driven home when a 30-year-old junior high art teacher jumped from a five-story school building in February after being scolded for giving corporal punishment to a student. The teacher, Tetsu Honda, had forced a female student to sit upright on the veranda of a classroom because she was wearing black socks in violation of a school regulation which mandates the wearing of white socks.

A major difference, however, between the predicament of the teachers and that of the students is this: teachers don't face an intensely competitive environment in which they must pursue goals which are not of their own choosing.

*How Is Japan Unique?*

School crises are not unique to Japan. Certainly violence, bullying, and suicide are just as menacing, if not more so, in other countries.

In 1982, Japan ranked sixth internationally for suicides of youths between the ages of 15 and 24. The number of deaths per 100,000 population of this age was: 20.5 in Australia, 17.9 in Finland, 12.3 in the United States, and 10.6

in Japan.

The Japan Youth Research Institute (JYRI) made a comparative study which indicated that bullying among students is also more prominent in America. As difficult as it is to measure, bullying was reported by 84 percent of the 812 junior high teachers surveyed in America and by 73 percent of the 880 teachers in Japan ("Teachers Here Work," 1986).

The Management and Coordination Agency claims that young people in Japan are "mostly satisfied" with life today. Since 1970, the agency's surveys showed that a majority of young Japanese were dissatisfied with life. But, for the first time in 15 years, the dissatisfied category dropped to a minority at 43 percent. This compared favorably to rates of dissatisfaction in a 1983 poll of foreign youths: 55 percent in America, 54 percent in Britain, and 64 percent in France ("Majority of Youth," 1986).

Unfortunately, such comparisons are frequently used to excuse abusive attitudes towards young people if it can be shown that the conditions are worse in some "rival" nation. Clearly, all nations have a lot of improvements to make.

A further complication is that the surveys are usually comparing situations which are as different as apples and oranges. Japan can be characterized as having a very homogeneous population that tolerates a high degree of teacher bullying and there is an unusually strong incentive to keep matters quiet and out of the courts.

*"Victims Brought It on Themselves"*

Polls have indicated that people in Japan are much less likely to come to the aid of abuse victims than are people in the West. Frequently, the Japanese assume that victims of abuse must have done something to cause their own misfortune.

Shooji Teraoki, an education specialist for the Hakodate Board of Education, told a local PTA meeting recently that parents usually think their own children are at fault when they have been bullied by others. Seventy percent of the parents of junior high boys and 64 percent of the parents of junior high girls thought their children brought the bullying upon themselves. Such an attitude certainly makes it difficult for students to turn to their parents for help. And it's even more difficult to find help among the teachers.

A survey by the National Police Agency found that 40 percent of the victims of bullying had been able to consult with their parents, but only 20 percent had been able to consult their teachers. "Which leaves 40% probably living alone with their problems," said the editors of *The Japan Times*. "It is out of that group, we dare say, that most of the suicides come" ("Two Waves," 1986).

*Silent Suffering: A National Virtue*

Thus, in the midst of a nation which is renowned for its tight social fiber and strong group identity, a great many young people feel desperately alone and without a voice. This "silent suffering" is, ironically, nurtured in Japanese culture as a great, noble virtue.

I asked one college student, who is studying to become a high school teacher, "What is the best way to protect a student from a bad teacher?" She told me that such a student "should silently think bad thoughts about the teacher all throughout the year."

Silence, of course, is no outlet at all. And where this is practiced on a grand scale, there are bound to be widespread neuroses. This is precisely what was suspected, and confirmed, by a research team from the Chiba University medical school. Toshio Sato, an associate professor at the psychiatry and neurology department, asserts that one out of every five senior high school students is neurotic.

Many of these students, based on an appraisal of 16 high schools, said that they were studying only because others were studying or because parents and teachers were forcing them to study. Half of the youths said that it was psychologically painful, or not pleasant, to go to school ("1/5 of Senior," 1986).

Railing against this kind of educational atmosphere, Ken Kageyama blasted the system saying, "Children are being forced to cram knowledge into their brains while they do not know why they have to study. Schools have become like prisons" (Kawabata, 1986).

*Joint Responsibility*

One phenomenon that would be intolerable to most westerners, but is commonplace in Japanese schools, is the practice of "joint responsibility." Thus, a whole group of people can be held responsible for the behavior of one individual member of that group. Likewise, one individual can be punished simply for associating with other people that are considered to be "bad."

At a high school in Hakodate City, for example, the baseball team had to forfeit a championship playoff one year because a member of the team had been involved in a car accident that resulted in someone's injury. Said one teacher, "The whole school had to take responsibility and leave the tournament. Besides, it's the rule of the national baseball association that governs these events. Sports organizations are particularly strict."

Another teacher, a foreigner at a girls' junior high school, recently told me that she was surprised to discover that all the students in one class had failed the same test. "When I asked how they could all have gotten zeros," recalled the woman, "the girls told me that it was because one of the students had cheated. They didn't seem to be the slightest bit upset that they all had to take the punishment for one student's cheating."

*Punishment: It's All for One and One for All*

Reiko Takahashi, a housewife from Akita City, declared, "It seems that the bad practice of the prewar years has not disappeared in 40 years.

"I recall my humiliation during the war," said Ms. Takahashi, "when I was still in elementary school. Under the principle of joint responsibility, a group member's mistake was the group leader's responsibility, and class misdeeds were the responsibility of the class leader. Naturally, everybody received a shower of punches for whatever reason, whether girl or boy" (Takahashi, 1986).

Since everyone can be made to suffer for the actions of a few, it is in everyone's immediate concern that non-conformity be quashed. The pervasiveness of this attitude goes a long way in explaining why young toughs "lean on" those who are different, why innocent bystanders rarely come to the defense of misfits, and why, in Ko Mori's words, "teachers do nothing about bullying but try desperately to prevent it from becoming known outside the school."

As stated in a frequently quoted Japanese proverb, "The nail that stands up gets hammered down."

*Roots of Groupism Not So Mysterious*

Those Americans who are most impressed with the group discipline in Japanese schools will sometimes speak mysteriously, and admiringly, about the country's deep historic and cultural roots. One Japanese woman who was particularly frustrated with the intolerance of her countrymen towards individuality explained that some of the origins of "groupism" are neither mysterious nor admirable.

During the Tokugawa era, which spanned three centuries, the shogun set up a very strict system of control called the "5-man system." In many regions of the country, she explained, neighborhoods were divided into groups of five families which were held completely responsible for the behavior of every individual in the group.

If someone didn't pay the rice tax or if one household took in a stranger, all members of the five families had to take responsibility for the action. In severe cases they could all be put to death.

Naturally, it was in everyone's interest not to attract attention or to have anyone say, "You are different!" Furthermore, it was imperative to keep a close watch on one's neighbors and to shun strangers who might be spies for the authorities.

In addition, the central government introduced a rigid class system which was bound by strict rules concerning nearly every aspect of life—clothes, hair, manners, speech, everything. Members of a peasant family might be prohibited from wearing silk, a sash, certain shoes, trailing sleeves, bright colors, or clothes with the wrong sized polka dot.

"Still there were violations in those days," the woman told me. "People have energy. But 300 years is a long time and the attitudes became very deeply ingrained in society."

Indeed, one can find many comparisons between the comprehensive nature of the shogun's rules of dress and behavior and the rules that exist in some of today's schools.

*The Shogun's Ghost*

Despite the diffusion of power in Japan following World War II, one can still see vestiges of the super-centralized state. "Take any Japanese child," says reporter Keith Richburg, "ask him his age, and you can tell exactly what he is learning in school on that given day, no matter if he is in Tokyo, Kyoto, or Osaka. Japanese textbooks are rigidly defined to advance students along an accepted volume of knowledge according to a specific schedule" (Richburg,

1985). This has come to be known as "kanri kyoiku," which literally means controlled education.

While this sort of controlled education might be admired for the promotion of rote memorization, the kind of thing that goes over well on standardized tests, it does not foster creativity and a whole variety of individual human talents. This was the conclusion of the Education Ministry following an analysis of tests which were administered in 1985.

This December report of the Ministry found that, while the scholastic ability of Japanese junior high school students has been improving on subjects which require memorization and calculation, students scored poorly on questions requiring them to think logically and systematically by themselves.

This does not bode well for a nation that is preparing its young people for democratic self-determination and for leadership in the next stage of economic ascendancy. The Japanese people seem to be well aware of this educational failure and they are not pleased.

The following section examines many of the efforts that are being undertaken in Japan to deal with the problems of bullying and violence in the schools.

## A NATION RESPONDS TO THE CRISIS

*Life or Death Education*

Seventy-three percent of the nation's voters are dissatisfied with the current education system. According to the Yomiuri Shimbun, "bullying" and "teacher quality" are ranked as the two top problems ("School Education," 1986). And, at a meeting of the All-Japan Junior High School Principals Association, more than a quarter of the principals said that emergency reform measures were necessary because the situation in the schools was a life-or-death matter ("Survey Reveals," 1986).

What is being done about the problems in Japanese schools? There seems to be a mixed bag of developments that are taking place.

School violence has reached such proportions in Japan that Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone has instructed the Ministry of Education to initiate a sweeping investigation of the causes and possible solutions. In response, the Ministry of Education has called on schools to set up consultation and guidance facilities for use by parents and students.

*The Yen Solutions*

The National Police Agency is behaving in the usual manner of bureaucracies. It is growing. The NPA has recently decided to inaugurate the post of special advisor for "juvenile delinquency problems." And there are plans to increase the number of local juvenile problem advisors from the present 14 to a total of 107.

For those who are afraid of, or unimpressed with, the authorities, they might turn to the local "bully-busters." The Nihon Bullying Survey Center in Tokyo, for instance, is a new company that offers to secretly check on, and prevent, bullying for a survey fee of $150 plus expenses. The company flyer, which seems

to reflect the fears of many Tokyo parents today, boldly exclaims, "Your child is in danger! It's no longer someone else's problem! The schools and teachers have lost power and can no longer be depended upon!" ("Tokyo Police," 1986).

Teachers unions, some of the strongest unions in the country, have demanded higher pay scales and lighter class loads in order to be able to provide more quality care for young people. Studies have lent support to the union's complaints by pointing out that Japanese junior high school teachers have twice the average class load and work far more overtime hours than their counterparts in the United States.

*A Return to the Emperor's Morality?*

Some believe that fostering morality and patriotism in the schools can avert the crisis. The national primary school principal's association called on the government to distribute textbooks on moral education. The Ministry of Education called on all public schools to raise the flag and play the semi-official anthem at school ceremonies. And one prefectural board distributed pamphlets that praise the "emperor system."

Right-wing political groups have tried to enforce the government's mandates on flag-raising by storming school ceremonies in some of the districts where these nationalistic rituals were not observed. Just as vigorously, they have been opposed by left-wing groups and teachers unions which have expressed fears of a resurgent patriotic militarism.

To many of the Japanese, it was the mandatory use of such songs and flags, the symbols of state worship, that helped lead the nation to its tragic ordeal in the Pacific War. It is argued that such practices have neither been the friend of reason nor of individuality.

*Youth Rights Promoted*

The most promising efforts at reform have been pushed by the media and by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. For its part, the Bar Association held a convention which focused specifically on the lack of protection afforded young people in the schools.

After airing the problems thoroughly in local association meetings, a declaration was issued which championed youth rights. A few months later, the Japan Teacher's Union disclosed its plans to cooperate with the bar association in creating legislation to protect the human rights of children.

An editorial in the *Asahi Shimbun* praised the bar saying, "The declaration was a warning against the growing trend among today's schools to demand absolute obedience on the part of children by virtually bullying them into submission. . . .

"Children brought up in this manner," continues the editorial, "will hardly learn to make their own decisions and act on their initiative. They are likely to become irresponsible and apathetic adults who can only follow orders from above and move in folds like sheep. It is rather frightening to think that the next generation may be filled with these types" (" 'Education' by Force," 1986).

*Not Content to Be Sheep*

Japanese youth have not always been content to "move in folds like sheep." While the circumstances are many and varied, the young have found ways to vent their frustrations.

Ten years ago it was the motorcycle gangs, or "bozo-zoku," that began to openly defy authority. Around 1982, violence erupted in the schools at all levels. Breaking windows, pulling weapons on teachers, and name-calling became more common as young people struck back at a system that seemed to cause them so much suffering. Bullying is the latest manifestation of this defiance.

Compulsory attendance and a myriad of school rules have surely contributed to the violence since there are few outlets for beleaguered students. Attendance is compulsory through the junior high level. Afterwards, even though 95 percent of the young continue on to senior high, the incidents of bullying appear to drop off dramatically. From April to October of last year, there were 52,891 reports of bullying in junior high schools compared with 5,718 in the senior high schools—a difference of nine to one ("Bullying on the Rise," 1986).

*Choice Is Power for the Victim*

Despite the law, there is an increasing number of young people who are refusing to go to school. The 1984 data reveal a 9 percent increase in junior high school truancy over the year before. Catering to some of these independent youths is a new breed of school.

Keiko Okuchi, the director of a private alternative school, commented, "In this country, attending school is considered to be the one-and-only choice for children. So it is a horrible thing for parents as well as children themselves when they start to refuse to attend school" (Jo, 1986). Okuchi's school serves about 40 elementary and junior high school aged students who quit school because of bullying or because of the stringent school regulations.

"Under the circumstances, children who feel uncomfortable with, and question, regulations are considered to be problem students, and slow learners are viewed to be inferior to other students," says Okuchi. "But, I believe that a truly good education system would work without regulations and a strong orientation toward academic achievement. Through the Tokyo Shule, I just wanted to prove it."

Through the junior high school level the Ministry of Education mandates basic guidelines for curriculum and provides a list of acceptable textbooks. These texts are provided by the government at no cost to the student, but the books are very carefully censored.

These guidelines are loosened at the high school and college levels, but private schools are still kept under reign by strings that are attached to a substantial level of government subsidies. And graduates of the private colleges that do not observe these controls are denied entry to government jobs.

*Begging to Study?*

A great deal is occurring outside the official channels of education. Presently, parents are paying more than $5 billion a year to send their children to the

100,000 private evening schools, known as "juku's." Nearly half of the junior high school youths, who are preparing for their high school entrance exams, find that juku's offer courses which are far more advanced than those of the public schools. Despite the extra hours of study, many students seem to prefer the jukus over their regular schools.

Akio Sugasaki, Chief of the Hakodate Reformatory, is quoted telling a local Parent Teachers Association that bullying does not occur in the juku schools where attendance is voluntary and where there are few regulations. One parent told me that her son was the last student in his junior high class to enroll in a juku. "My son begged me to let him go to the juku like the other kids," she said. "Now, he loves the juku and never wants to stay at home. It's just the opposite when it comes to the regular school."

"At the juku," smiled the woman, "the teachers still hit students sometimes, but the hitting concerns their studies rather than a long list of picky rules. We're paying for it. If we didn't like it—sayonara." Consequently, teachers that are employed are the ones who can attract and keep students.

Says one boy, "To tell the truth, it's fun to attend juku. I meet new good friends and study under good teachers who are rarely found at my school" (Okada, 1986).

*Why Are the Juku So Popular?*

These private schools cater to young people of all ages—from pre-kindergarten to college. The Tohkka Institute of Early Education, for instance, helps children from one to five years old in preparing for kindergarten entrance examinations. When a two-year-old girl at the institution said, "I love to go to study," the mother commented that the girl even gives her a hard time when the class does not meet (Ohki, 1985).

A recent book, *The Yobiko*, gives a very positive description of life in the preparatory "cram" schools which cater to students who have failed the college entrance exams. The 25 young people who edited this book say that students can enjoy freedom and a life full of activities at these institutions.

"Why Are the Juku So Popular?" asked the editors of *The Japan Times*. They observe that this kind of school provides a friendly and purposeful community life, which stands in sharp contrast to the regular high schools. "To put it the baldest: Are we not witnessing the development of an educational system to substitute for the public one that we pay taxes for and hear nothing of but complaints?" ("Why Are the Juku," 1986).

*Home Schooling Takes Root*

Of the 109,000 youths who drop out of high school, some find a path to success in home schooling. The idea is being popularized by Tsutomo Isomura in his two books, "Miraculous Face to Face Education" and "Revolution at Home for Creating Geniuses."

Isomura has been selling thousands of copies of his books over the past three years by telling about the successes of his five children and by offering a critique of the educational system. He believes that his children have made it into

the nation's top universities with a better education than they could have had in the public schools. One of his children is now a student at Tokyo University and two others are students at Kyoto University, two of Japan's most prestigious colleges.

"Teachers instruct everyone the same way," says Isomura, "but no two people learn the same way. I want my kids to read what they like and like what they do, to learn and think deeply for themselves." Isomura's children all dropped out of school at age 15, the limit of compulsory attendance (Brody, 1986).

*Electric Shock Treatment for "School Phobia"?*

For those youths who can't wait until the age of 15, the story might be very different—more like a horror story than a success story. Yasuko Takemura, a member of the Diet, the Japanese parliament, recently expressed alarm at reports that students who had refused to go to school were being sent to mental hospitals.

Takemura's secretary told reporters that doctors had isolated students for a few weeks in a room at a mental hospital where they were given drugs as a "treatment" for "school phobia." Some of the students who experienced the therapy reported that the doctor even gave them electric shock treatment.

These revelations appeared just as a research council of the Liberal-Democratic Party issued a report which demands strict new measures for compulsory hospitalization of the mentally ill. If "school phobia" truly is an official classification of mental illness, then young people are in for some real trouble. And so are the adults.

*Energy for Change*

There is always a great deal of interest in education reform. This seems to be true in every country. Unfortunately, it seems that people are frequently looking for a new, ideal model in the autocratic education system of some distant land. Many Americans have envied the Japanese model, and many Japanese have envied the American model.

Among education experts, this frequently means that minor variations in teaching methods or administrative structures are viewed with great fascination. And, after many arguments with reluctant traditionalists, microscopic changes are adopted with much fanfare and without questioning the fundamental premises.

Someday, those who are truly interested in the growth of human beings, of all ages, will find that the greatest source of imagination is to be found among the young people themselves. And when the energy is tapped, instead of capped, then education will be the realization of human potential rather than a means of enshrining humankind's past.

*"Harmony is a Pleasant Combination of Different Notes"*

One of the most insidious remnants of that past is the acceptance of force as a means to glorious ends. Many Japanese still appear to believe that the way to teach the virtues of consensus and group harmony is through a system of

corporal punishment and enforced conformity. Such contradictions are part of the daily fare for young people growing up in society.

Since bright, independent young people learn better by imitation than by lectures on virtue, they learn much that was unintended by their teachers. Many of them learn the skills of intimidation and violence while scores of their peers must suffer the torment and blows.

Lamenting over this sad condition, one parent appealed to her neighbors in Japan saying, "Harmony shouldn't mean standing mute and blind while somebody big steps on you or on someone else . . . Harmony is not only silence but a pleasant combination of different notes" (Newport, 1986).

This rather libertarian view points the way to an alternative. It is to recognize that young people are human beings, not animals, and as such they have the same rights against the use of aggression and coercion as do all other human beings.

## REFERENCES


Almost half of teachers polled support corporal punishment. (1986, March 12). *The Asahi Evening News.*

Brody, Leslie. (1986, May 9). Road to success starts by dropping out of high school. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Bullying on the rise, survey shows. (1986, February 23). *The Japan Times.*

Children attending cram schools double and triple in 10 years. (1986, February 21). *The Japan Times.*

'Education' by force. (1986, October 22). *Asahi Shimbun.*

50% blame school bullying on problems with families. (1986, March 24). *The Asahi Evening News.*

Gist of Education Council's proposals. (1986, February 24). *The Japan Times.*

Jo, Toshio. Teacher offers school for kids who won't go to usual classes. (1986, April 22). *The Japan Times.*

Junior high class sizes here are double those in the U.S. (1986, February 15). *The Asahi Evening News.*

Kato, Kinji. (1985, December 3). Tolerate the loving whip. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Kawabata, Tai. (1986, April 23). When 'controlled education' at schools in Aichi goes awry. *The Japan Times.*

Kawahara, Toshiya. (1986, April 28). Corporal punishment in schools illegal, but cases of battered pupils on the rise. *The Japan Times.*

Komatsu, Eizaburo. (1985, December 19). 50 per class too many. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Majority of youth content with life. (1986, January 16). *The Daily Yomiuri.*

Makihara, Kumiko. (1986, April 23). Suicidal youths following idol singer to their deaths. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Maruyama, Hitoshi. (1986, January 21). School bullying. *The Japan Times.*

Mori, Ko. (1985, December 22). Rotten teachers create rotten kids. *The Japan Times.*

Most students who received corporal punishment got hurt. (1985, December 9). *The Asahi Evening News.*

Murakami, Yoshio. (1985, October 7). Bullying is running out of control. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Nakatsuka, Noriyuki. (1985, December 12). Verbal abuse from the teacher. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Newport, Sally. (1986, February 22). School violence. *The Japan Times.*

Nishigaito, Masaru. (1985, November 27). Violence at the teachers' hands. *The Asahi Evening News.*

Ohki, Emiko. (1985, November 24). Pre-kindergarten tutoring institutions thrive. *The Japan Times.*

Okada, Keisuke. (1986, April 25). 'Entrance exam war'—Ordeal now, reward latter. *The Japan Times*.
1/5 of senior high students neurotic. (1986, March 19). *The Japan Times*.
Panel urges educational reforms. (1985, June 29). *The Japan Times*.
Poll: Kids get punished 23 times as students. (1986, January 20). *The Daily Yomiuri*.
Richburg, Keith. (1985, October 26). U.S. educators marvel at Japan's schools. *The Japan Times*.
School bullying cases triple. (1986, April 14). *The Japan Times*.
School education gets negative vote. (1986, March 11). *The Daily Yomiuri*.
School punishment to be checked. (1985, October 24). *The Japan Times*.
Schools 'too strict' on students: Report. (1985, September 2). *The Daily Yomiuri*.
16 former students file damage suit against school for alleged violence. (1986, March 1). *The Japan Times*.
Survey shows school bullying on the rise. (1986, February 22). *The Asahi Evening News*.
Survey reveals teachers' part in rise of bullying. (1986, April 11). *The Asahi Evening News*.
Takahashi, Rika. (1985, November 30). Restrict corporal punishment. *The Asahi Evening News*.
Teachers here work harder than in U.S. (1986, February 16). *The Japan Times*.
Tokyo police investigating bully-busters-for-hire-firm. (1986, March 11). *The Asahi Evening News*.
Two waves, one undertow. (1986, April 19). *The Japan Times*.
Verdict spotlights school corporal punishment. (1986, March 23). *The Japan Times*.
Why are the Juku so popular? (1986, April 11). *The Japan Times*.